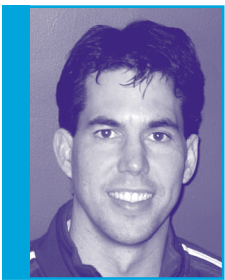




jointhevoicesforrecovery

Join the Voices for Recovery

One of the most powerful and valuable tools to help educate people across the country are personal stories of those who have been triumphant in overcoming a substance use disorder. These voices are genuine examples of the benefits of recovery. Read below for the unique stories that are truly representative of the wide scope of people who suffer from substance use disorders. Share them with colleagues, family, and friends during **National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month (Recovery Month)** to celebrate and recognize the accomplishments of people who have lifted up their voices to help reduce and eliminate stigma, discrimination, and other barriers to treatment. Use these stories as a tool to encourage others in need to enter treatment and celebrate recovery.



Dan Griffin

Person in Recovery, Husband, Son, Citizen

Early in my recovery, I often found myself asking, “Why did I end up a person with an addiction to alcohol and other drugs?” I also asked how it could be that at age 21 I found myself in my counselor’s office on the campus of my university, admitting I had a problem. Admitting with great humiliation and disgust that I was an alcoholic

and was just like my father. I did not know it was a disease. I did not know how bad it had gotten. A year later, shortly after celebrating a year of sobriety with my father, both of us sober, he relapsed and died. I had made a secret promise that if my father died I would drink again. I wanted to know him. I felt I deserved it. But, when the time came and I received the call telling me he had been found dead at age 54 (due to an overdose of alcohol), alone, in the kitchen of our nice home on the nice golf course in nice suburban Maryland, drinking was the last thing that I wanted to do. In fact, I made another promise to God and to myself shortly after he died. I had heard that for every person who dies addicted to alcohol and other drugs, another one gets sober. I decided one night shortly after the funeral that I was going to be the one who got sober. I promised that my father would not have died in vain. Today, I continue to do my best to keep that promise and live a life that reflects it. As a result, I have been blessed with a wonderful life with 11 years of recovery. I am married, employed, and vote. I participate fully in life! I continue to discover the things about which I am passionate. That passion guides how I live my life and I do all of it sober today. Eleven years ago, I was a scared little boy in a young man’s body. Today, I am a man who understands, on most days, that life is a mystery full of joy and pain, but misery is optional. I do not know where my life is going, but I trust and believe in my heart that as long as I stay sober, my life will be: Always this or something better. And for that, I am very grateful.



Ryan Thorpe

Admissions Counselor

I came from a very successful family and had every opportunity to do well in life, and for years I did. However, as a kid, I never was quite able to truly be comfortable with my life and I always felt like something was missing. This lack of fulfillment eventually led me to the path and lifestyle of drug addiction. My family watched me become helpless and in despair as an alcohol and marijuana addiction led to a cocaine addiction, which then led to a raging heroin addiction. The years of success that I had built my life on were wasted on nine years on hard drugs as I ended up in jail. My family helped me locate a rehabilitation center and I wanted to pick up the pieces of my life. I started my recovery process with an arrest record, multiple debts, burned bridges, distrust and mistrust, and little hope. After receiving treatment, I recognized that there was hope for me and that I was done with my old lifestyle. Since then, I have made the most of my three years being clean. Today, I am accomplished, successful, and I have made my family proud! I no longer feel I am missing something in life. There is always hope and I am indeed living proof.



Stacy A. Spain

Mother, Artist, Seamstress

My life began October 18, 2000. That day, for the first time ever, I began to live life on life's terms, without the use of any mood- or mind-altering drugs. That was the day I began the journey to being a responsible worker, a loving sibling, and a good mother to my four children. My family saw the worst; they've also seen the growth and changes. I used to be the neighbor everyone wished would move away, the sister you didn't invite to dinner, the mom you didn't talk about. Today, I live my life knowing I am a productive member of society and a role model to my children and grandchildren. This year, God willing, I will celebrate six years clean. I am a recovering addict who proudly and openly admits that to anyone. My addiction affected everything in my life. My recovery does as well.



Amanda Anzalone

Public Contact Supervisor

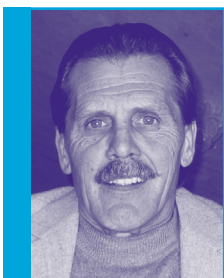
Before I decided to enter a rehabilitation program, I had no purpose or direction. The main ingredient in my life was methamphetamine. Eventually, my family encouraged me to get help, and finally I made the decision to go to rehab. The program taught me how to be happy with myself, and that I can achieve the things that I want in life! Now I am happily married and I am working to help others on their path of recovery.



Lucas A. Catton

Recovery Advocate

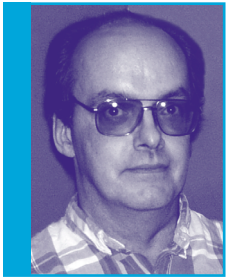
After growing up a fairly “normal” kid, my focus shifted from school, family, sports, and church to going to parties and getting drunk when I turned 16. My alcoholism and drug use led me down a road to drop out of two colleges, quit playing sports, and separate myself from all the good people in my life who cared about me. Several years later, I reached out to my family for help. They found a place that was a non-traditional treatment program and truly helped me save my life. Things have changed since then. Not only did I clean myself up, but each day gets better. I decided that I wanted to give back and help others and started working in the drug prevention and treatment field. This has become my passion, from working with kids and adults to educating elected officials and community leaders. I have communicated anti-drug messages to millions of people through the media. I have even published a book with the hope of helping even more people escape the downward spiral of substance abuse or avoid it altogether.



Gary Smith

Executive Director

I traveled down the road of addiction. For several years, my life revolved around drugs and my addiction. Then I came upon a rehabilitation program and it forever changed my life. After graduating from the program, I knew there was a great need for people who were struggling with a drug or alcohol addiction. That is why I chose to give back to society and be one of the founding members of a rehabilitation program. In 16 years, it has become the premier rehabilitation and international training center. I am proud to be the executive director and help so many people rediscover their lives.



Dave Harm

Author, Poet, Editor

I quit drinking 11 years ago, after a major dose of reality. That reality was that partying was no longer “cool.” My family and friends lived in a constant state of fear, brought on by my violent episodes when I was under the influence of drugs or alcohol. I tried suicide, I’ve overdosed, and was homeless for over a year. But none of that made me realize that I had a problem until a police officer took my children out of our home for their own protection. I would end up going through the court system and hearing from these children how they lived in fear, never knowing what to expect. I finally realized that my drinking was no longer destroying my own life, but everyone who was around me was also affected. I spent a life of “taking” from the ones I supposedly loved. I took their possessions, I took their money, and then I took their souls. Today, I try to live a life of “giving.” I share my story through the books I’ve written (***Damaged Merchandise; Poems and Stories of an Alcoholic Addict*** and ***War Zone, Backing Out of Hell***) and through poetry and short stories on various Web sites. With sobriety, I’ve come to realize it’s not about perfection, just progression; it’s not about the destination, just the journey; and it’s not about the goal, just the effort. Looking back, I’ve come a long way in 11 years. And it was all because I admitted I was powerless over alcohol and I turned my life over to my Higher Power.



Chris Red

Graduate Officer

Drug addiction took over my life. By the time I was 21 years old, I was shooting up \$300 to \$400 a day of heroin, along with using cocaine and marijuana on a regular basis. I decided to call my mom and let her know, fully, the condition of my drug addiction. That’s when we found a rehabilitation program and I finally admitted that I needed help. I quickly began to realize that there was a great possibility I would be able to live my life without drugs. I graduated on March 23, 2001, and have been completely clean and sober since then. Now, I am happily married with my first son. I work with a rehabilitation program to help others establish a solid future in recovery.



David Jackson

Recovery Outreach Minister

I grew up in the projects in a tough, poor section of Brooklyn. As a “light-skinned” black kid I was always justifying that I belonged. I started drinking at age 14 and almost immediately I felt like I belonged no matter where I was. From the beginning I drank to get drunk. Eventually, my drinking led to medical problems, lost jobs, and broken relations with my wife and family. While in the hospital a friend asked me to read the Bible. I opened to the Book of Romans that said, “Have joy in your suffering that will build perseverance, and perseverance builds character, and character builds hope.” At that moment, hope was all I could hold on to. I started going to 12-step meetings and put God and recovery first in my life. God has taken me to jails, a detox center, treatment facilities, youth centers, wherever I can bring the message of hope in recovery. I know the work of serenity and I am truly blessed to be alive and sober. I pray every day that God keeps me sober, gives me strength and sends me somewhere to reflect His light of hope in recovery.



Erica Catton

Senior Director for Administration

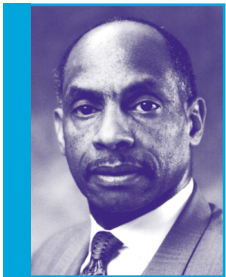
When I started doing drugs, my life as I knew it came to a sudden halt. Since I was 13 years old, drugs robbed me of having a chance to learn how wonderful life can be. My dad found me a rehabilitation program, and while in the program, I finally realized that there was actually a solution to my immediate problem—there is life after drugs! I learned to live without drugs. Many do it. Many fail. You have to look at it as a fight for your life because that’s what you are fighting to get back. You have to know that you are in control of your life. Being a heroin addict is not what I was destined to be. I just got sidetracked along the way. Now, I am happily married and work to help others fight this difficult battle.



Maureen Schaefer

Recovery Advocate

I started to drink at age 18 to fit in with my friends. I thought it was drinking that gave me a personality and I never thought I had anything to offer without it. Eventually, I realized I was being laughed at by my “friends,” so I retreated and drank alone. You stop growing when you enter addiction. I was stuck at age 18 and never learned how to live in a grown-up world. I just did what I did best—drank and hid from life. At age 45, something in me snapped and I decided I wanted to live. I entered a treatment program and found a counselor who helped me learn how to love myself. I tell you if I knew life could be this good and this real after three short years in recovery, I would have done this long ago. Recovery has taught me to live my life passionately.



Gregory K. Alex, M.A., CDC

Executive Director, The Matt Talbot Recovery Center

As a minister and an executive director of a treatment program, I am blessed to be able to see the miracle we know as “recovery” occur daily. We work with the homeless, addicted, and mentally ill in the Seattle area, journeying with them as they seek healing, hope, and restoration. Our services are free, on demand, and delivered with hope and dignity. As the founding director of the Matt Talbot Recovery Center, I—along with the center itself—am celebrating 20 years of this work. The most amazing lesson for me in these two decades is this: the human spirit is more resilient than we can imagine. A family may give up on a person and people may give up on themselves. But if we woke up this morning, a power greater than ourselves believes in us. “May we find Him now.” Our job is to help people begin to believe, and relationships are the key. Mother Teresa said, “The greatest poverty in the world is loneliness.” If we will be present, the miracle can begin.



Mike Anzalone

Deputy Executive Director for Delivery and Exchange

Struggling through a drug addiction destroyed not only my life, but also my family. Finally, I found the answer, and for me it was going through a rehabilitation program. After graduating, I had the opportunity to help change another person’s life and I couldn’t let that pass by. Individuals all over the world are experiencing a drug or alcohol addiction, and being able to provide assistance to them while witnessing incredible changes is a very humbling and gratifying experience. To be able to provide peace of mind to a family is what I do. I am now happily married and have a more positive outlook on life.



Jennifer Romano

Meth Recovery Advocate

Meth destroyed me—it cost me my marriage, my relationship with my children, and my friends' and family's trust. Worst of all, it almost cost me the life of my youngest daughter. I used meth for the first time in February 1999. It didn't take very long for me to start shooting it up on a regular basis. I went into labor with my baby six weeks early, and I think it's because that night, I shot up meth. I am so lucky that she is healthy now. In time, I finally understood what this drug was doing to me, and I knew that I had to stop for good. So I did. I now battle awful cravings and powerful urges, but I have been clean since November 13, 2004—and every day is just as hard as the previous one. I was able to get clean through my own perseverance and the help of a good friend who I am currently engaged to marry. I attend support meetings that help me get some solid ground to stand on for my children. I am not just someone you read about—I am a real person. I can only hope that my story is found by those who need it, and that they can learn from my mistakes and save their own lives.



Kevin Jessup

Assistant to the Executive Director

In December 2002, I arrived at my first rehabilitation program as a completely broken man. After almost 20 years of alcohol and cocaine addiction, two failed marriages, and a failed business career, I had no hope left. I was resigned to drinking my life away and honestly believed that death would have been better than facing life looking up from the bottom of a bottle. I completed my program in February 2003 and decided to stay and train as a staff member. Now 2 1/2 years later, I am healthy, happy, and a valuable contributing member of society again. In just that short time I have gone from being a trainee to the executive director's personal assistant and right-hand man. Now I am dedicated to helping salvage a planet ravaged by substance abuse, saving lives, reuniting families, and helping to build stronger communities.



Mark Koss

Personnel Procurement Officer

I truly found life when I finally realized that rehabilitation was the only answer out of my addiction. Before cocaine took over my life, I was very successful and happily married with two precious children. Then, I lost everything! I hated myself!

I graduated from a rehabilitation program in 2001 and I felt my life was back together.

I was happy, but there was something missing. After searching for that missing component in my life, I began to work at a rehabilitation program to help save peoples' lives and give back to society.



Dee'Borah Mack

Recovery Advocate

I started getting high on crack/cocaine on September 28, 1995, after my child died of sudden infant death syndrome. I first blamed my child for getting high, and then I blamed myself. I felt getting high was the easy way to get a sudden relief; I could feel numb and escape. I continued to get high, became addicted, and eventually went to

jail for 2 months. After I got out, I spent several months on house arrest. The judge re-sentenced me and I was able to go to treatment. I made it through and passed all of the tests and screenings three times per week. I was scared to do anything after I was released because I didn't know what was available to me anymore. I was proud of what I accomplished, but was not sure of exactly what I could do next. I ended up being reunited with my children on June 27, 2005, for my son's 16th birthday. I was nervous that he would not want to see me, but when I got there he was so proud and happy to see me.